DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 807 HE 021 669

AUTHOR Sergent, Marie T.; And Others
TITLE Services Offered to Disabled Students in Higher Education: A Five Year National Survey. Research Report 4-88.
INSTITUTION Maryland Univ., College Park. Counseling Center.
PUB DATE Apr 88
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Accessibility (for Disabled); Access to Education; Architecture; *College Role; Counseling; Deaf Interpreting; Design Requirements; Educational Assessment; *Educational Responsibility; Hearing Impairments; Higher Education; Learning Disabilities; National Surveys; Physical Mobility; Services; Tutoring; Visual Impairments

ABSTRACT

Statistical information about the services offered to disabled students over a 5-year span on college and university campuses nationwide is provided, and the results of the study and their implications for service providers are discussed. As an increased number of disabled students exercise their rights to higher education, campus service providers are confronted with the challenge of offering programs and services that are the most appropriate. Previous literature on the subject of disabled students on-campus is described. The current study collected data about programs, services, and types of disabilities of the disabled students. This information is part of an ongoing data bank established in 1982 to act as an information resource for disabled student service units nationwide as they planned programs, services, and annual budgets. Information was solicited through an annual survey. Results are discussed in terms of institutional characteristics, funding and staffing, disabled student population, and services offered. Services in general show a wide range and variety. The services most commonly available include consultation to faculty and staff, counseling, academic support in the form of tutoring, note-taking services, interpreters for hearing impaired students, test and quiz administration, and ordering of taped texts. An important trend identified is the increasing number of learning disabled students registered. However, only some of the services offered to this group showed a concurrent increase. Contains 7 references. (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED298807

COUNSELING CENTER

Office of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

College Park, Maryland

SERVICES OFFERED TO DISABLED STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A FIVE YEAR NATIONAL SURVEY

Research Report 4-88

Marie T. Sergent, Robert T. Carter,
William E. Sedlacek, and William R. Scales

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Counseling Center

~~Univ of MD~~

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

HE 021 669

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

COUNSELING CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND

SERVICES OFFERED TO DISABLED STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A FIVE YEAR NATIONAL SURVEY

Research Report 4-88

Marie T. Sergent, Robert T. Carter,
William E. Sedlacek, and William R. Scales

Computer time for this study was provided by the Computer Science Center, University of Maryland, College Park.

COUNSELING CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND

SERVICES OFFERED TO DISABLED STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A FIVE YEAR NATIONAL SURVEY

Marie T. Sergent, Robert T. Carter,
William E. Sedlacek, and William R. Scales

Research Report #4-88

SUMMARY

As an increased number of disabled students exercise their rights to higher education, campus service providers are confronted with the challenge of providing programs and services that are most needed by this group of students. The provision of appropriate services is one way to ensure that campus environments are attitudinally, as well as physically, accessible (Scales, 1986). Systematic research has been suggested as one means of assessing the needs of disabled students, the programs that are currently offered, and the ways in which service delivery could be improved to become increasingly responsive (Scales, 1986).

This study was undertaken in order to provide information about the services that were offered to disabled students over the past five years on college and university campuses nationwide. Data were provided by the disabled student services data bank, sponsored by the Association on Handicapped Student Service Programs in Higher Education (AHSSPPE). The results of the study and their implications for service providers were discussed.

The needs of disabled students on college campuses have become a national concern in the last decade. It has been estimated that approximately 35 million United States residents have various physical, mental, and emotional disabilities (McBee, 1982). Since the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, many disabled people in this country have exercised their rights to higher education (Scales, 1986). As more students with disabilities enter colleges and universities, campus service providers are confronted the challenge of providing programs and services that are most useful to this group to help ensure that higher education environments are attitudinally, as well as physically, accessible. Disabled students on campus represent a diverse group, with disabilities ranging from physical handicaps to learning disabilities, which indicates the necessity for specialized services to meet these varied needs (Patterson, Sedlacek, & Scales, 1988).

This diversity would suggest that organizational units responsible for disabled student services should be diverse and multifaceted. For example, McBee (1982) has observed that in addition to the structural and architectural changes that have been federally mandated to accomodate access for disabled students, colleges and universities should also provide: a) pre-admission counseling and orientation; b) training for faculty and staff to aid their work with students with various disabilities; c) academic support services to students, and

d) career placement assistance upon graduation. These suggested services can be coordinated by the disabled student office on each college and university campus, but additional services can appropriately be offered by other campus units, as well.

Current research findings suggest that while higher education institutions have made considerable progress in removing physical barriers for disabled students, fewer changes have occured in the area of support services. In a survey of 155 colleges, Marion and Iovacchini (1983) found that college administrators were making a concerted effort to respond to the regulations of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. However, other researchers (Warnath & Dunnington, 1981) have suggested that while some physical changes have been made to assist disabled persons on campus, additional changes are necessary. Architectural alteration constitutes only one step toward institutional accessibility, and additonal changes in the area of support services are also necessary. For example, Scales (1986) has noted that the concept of accessibility includes the elimination of policy barriers and the provision of appropriate services such as readers and interpreters.

These studies suggest the importance of examining program, staff, and student characteristics of colleges and universities which provide services to disabled students in order to understand national trends and developments. Although studies have reported administrative support for the admission of disabled students to higher education institutions, (c.f., Newman, 1976), the types of services that have been available to

these students once they are admitted are not clear and have not been described in a systematic manner. In his report to the U.S. House of Representatives, Scales (1986) recommended that studies assessing the "numbers, age levels, types of handicapping conditions and services required for disabled students in postsecondary education be established as a priority for effectively evaluating/improving the current level and type of services available" (p. 30). Currently, no systematic research has been conducted to assess the availability, range, and location of services for students in higher education settings. Resource lists, which have been compiled periodically and include surveys of available services from a variety of institutions, have been critized on the basis that they are outdated as quickly as they are published. Additionally, these surveys are often sent blindly to Student Affairs offices, which may not represent the best information source of campus services for disabled students (Jarrow, 1987).

The purpose of this article is to present data which have been collected over 5 years concerning the programs, services, and the types of disabilities of students attending colleges and universities nationwide. These data are part of an ongoing data bank that was established in 1982 to act as an information resource for disabled student service units nationwide as they planned programs, services, and annual budgets. The data bank, sponsored by the Association on Handicapped Student Service Programs in Postsecondary Education

(AHSSPPE), represents colleges and universities that are members of this organization.

Institutions

Surveys were distributed to the disabled student services (DSS) unit in each AHSSPPE institution which volunteered to participate in the data bank. Participation was renewed yearly, thus, membership in the data bank varied across the five year reporting period. Due to this sample fluctuation, the results have been stratified into large (total enrollment of 10,000 or more) and small (enrollment of fewer than 10,000) institutions in order to minimize misleading results.

Instrument

Information about disabled students served and services that were offered by the DSS offices was solicited through an annual survey. Additionally, various characteristics of the DSS unit, including size, staff characteristics, and funding, were assessed.

Results

Institutional Characteristics

For all five reporting years, most of the large schools were comprised of 4 year public universities and colleges, while relatively more 2 year schools were in the small school sample.

Funding and Staffing

On the average, the small schools reported a larger average budget than did large institutions over the five year period. The mean budget across five years for small institutions was $129,000, while the mean budget for large schools was $122,000.

These reported budget amounts include all expenses, including staffing, programming, etc. Budgets for both large and small institutions showed a decrease in the 1984-85 and the 1985-86 school years, with a subsequent increase in 1986-87. For these two years only, large institutions reported a larger mean budget than small institutions did (see Table 1). Table 1 also illustrates that the median budget was consistently smaller than the mean budget for large and small schools in all years. This suggests a skewed distribution with a few schools having relatively large budgets, but with most having budgets considerably less than the mean.

Despite these funding trends, absolute numbers of staff members employed by DSS offices were similar across institutional types. However, the mean educational level of employees differed somewhat, with large schools employing greater numbers of doctoral level staff and graduate assistants, and small colleges and universities more commonly employing Masters level staff and interns.

Disabled Student Population

Overall, large institutions reported that larger numbers of disabled students were registered with their DSS offices. For large institutions, the range of means of disabled students receiving services was 203 - 223. For small colleges and universities, this range was 95 - 175. Small institutions showed a gradual decrease in numbers of students registered with their DSS units, while large insititutions showed a stable pattern of

numbers of students served over the five year period.

Specifically, both large and small schools showed a decrease in the of mobility impaired students registered with their DSS offices across the five year period. This trend was particularly marked for small institutions. Another trend for both large and small institutions was the increasing number of learning disabled students that were registered with the DSS units in these schools. While occurring in both large and small institutions, large institutions reported the most marked trend, with the mean number of registered learning disabled students increasing from 26 in 1982 to 57 in 1987.

Services Offered

Despite the finding that total DSS budgets were relatively small, the scope of services provided to disabled students was quite expansive and diverse. There was little difference in the range or type of services offered by DSS units in the large and small schools, so the results will be presented in combined form. Institutions offered services commensurate with McBee's recommendations of counseling and orientation, training for faculty and staff, (accomplished through consultation with on-campus organizations and faculty), and academic support services to students (such as interpreters for the hearing impaired, note-taking assistance, and test and quiz administration). Other services that were commonly offered included special orientation, priority registration, and counseling. Services that were less commonly offered included the provision of personal care attendants, transportation, and equipment repair services.

However, it is less clear from the results of this study if McBee's recommendation of career placement assistance was met by schools in the sample; future researchers might wish to focus on the assessment of this variable. It might prove necessary to assess the services provided by other campus units to determine if these services are offered at these schools.

Services to learning disabled students showed a more moderate range and scope. Commonly offered services included tape ordering, test and quiz administration, and counseling services. These services showed a small but clear increase in availability across the five years under study. Testing and remedial services, support groups, and the editing of written work were less commonly offered to learning disabled students in large and small institutions. The frequency with which institutions reported offering these latter services showed little change across the five year period.

Discussion

The data presented here, representing five years of data collection of a nationwide sample of colleges and universities, provides a picture of disabled students in higher education and the variety of programs and services that have been available to them in the last five years.

Services for disabled students in general showed a wide range and variety. The types of services offered meet the recommendations set forth by McBee (1982), who suggested that services for disabled students should include academic support,

faculty and staff training and education, pre-admission counseling and orientation, and career placement asistance upon graduation. It appears that the former three recommendations are being met by disabled student service providers in higher education nationwide. The services that were most commonly available to disabled students included consultation to faculty and staff, counseling, academic support in the form of tutoring, note-taking services, interpreters for hearing impaired students, test and quiz administration, and ordering of taped texts. Additional research is necessary to determine the frequency with which institutions provide career placement assistance.

An important trend found in this study is the increasing number of learning disabled students registered with DSS offices on college and university campuses. This trend is likely to continue as more individuals take advantage of testing, diagnostic and remedial services that are becoming increasingly available to them. While the number of learning disabled students on college campuses is increasing, the number of mobility-impaired students receiving services showed a decrease in this study. Together these trends represent a challenge for campus disabled student service provider systems, which must be flexible enough to provide appropriate services for this changing population of students who perceive a need for specialized services. This is a particular challenge at a time when DSS budgets have remained relatively stable.

However, while the number of learning disabled students registered with DSS service providers is increasing on campuses

nationwide, only some of the services offered to this group of students showed a concurrent increase. Typically offered services included ordering of taped texts, test and quiz administration, note-taking services and counseling. These services showed an increase in availability across the five year period under study. Testing and diagnosis, remedial services, and editing of written work were less commonly offered, and remained stable in their frequency of availability. Of course, learning disabled students represent but one group of disabled students, but their increased numbers on college and university campuses suggest that their needs should be addressed more systematically. As the number of learning disabled students seeking services on campuses continues to rise, it will be increasingly important to assess the types of services that are needed and those that are currently offered to these students. Scales (1986) commented that the type of research presented here has become critical to service providers who must make decisions concerning programs and services to disabled students.

A limitation to the study may be that only AHSSPPE schools were surveyed. Thus, there may have been an overestimation of the range and types of services available in universities and colleges in general. Additional research with a more representative sample of institutions is necessary before these results can be generalized to other institutions. A related limitation of this study is the fluctuating nature of the sample. Although stratification of the results by large and small

institutions may help, caution should be employed when making firm conclusions based on the current data. Future longitudinal research should make an effort to select a representative sample and to follow this sample for the duration of the study.

Finally, although the data bank sponsored by AHSSPPE is still quite new, it provides an excellent source of information concerning the programs and services offered to disabled students in higher education institutions nationwide. The data bank has been utilized as a source of information for DSS programs when planning budgets, programs, and services, and has served as a communicative link between peer institutions. The data bank can be most updated and improved by the involvement of DSS programs that contribute data to the bank. In return, the data bank provides a wealth of information to its participants. For additional information about participating in the data bank, contact William Scales at the University of Maryland, College Park Office of Disabled Student Services.

References

Jarrow, J.E. (1987). Integration of individuals with disabilities in higher education: A review of the literature. Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 5, 38-57.

Marion, P., & Iovacchini, E.V. (1983). Services for handicapped students in higher education: An analysis of national trends. Journal of College Student Personnel, 22, 131-138.

McBee, M.A. (1982). Helping handicapped students succeed in college. Journal of the National Association for Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors, 45, 3-7.

Newman, J. (1976). Faculty attitudes toward handicapped students. Rehabilitation Literature, 37, 194-197.

Patterson, A.M., Sedlacek, W.E., & Scales, W.R. (1988). The other minority: Disabled student backgrounds and attitudes toward their university and its services. Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disabilities, 6, 86-94.

Scales, W. (1986). Postsecondary education for disabled students: Written testimony. Bulletin of the Association on Handicapped Student Service Programs in Post-Secondary Education. 4, 20-32.

Warnath, C.F., & Dunnington, L.G. (1981). Disabled students on the campus. Journal of College Student Personnel, 22, 236-241.

Table 1

Mean Budget Figures: Large and Small Institutions*

	Large		Small	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
1982-83	136,000	76,000	218,000	150,000
1983-84	126,000	69,000	157,000	63,000
1984-85	106,000	71,000	90,000	50,000
1985-86	104,000	74,000	80,000	43,000
1986-87	135,000	60,000	98,000	75,000

*All reported figures represent dollar amounts rounded to the neare: thousand.